

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03

SS-20 USIA-15 IO-14 DRC-01 /133 W

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R 041225Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2921

INFO AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L YAOUNDE 1026

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CM, NI

SUBJECT: CAMEROON-NIGERIA BORDER SITUATION

REF: YAOUNDE 2539, 2909

1. SUMMARY. IN RESPONSE LAGOS PRESS REPORT ON NIGERIA-CAMEROON BORDER DIFFICULTIES WHICH APPARENTLY GIVEN EXAGGERATED TREATMENT, GURC HAS ISSUED LOW KEY STATEMENT TO STRESS ITS DETERMINATION TO RESOLVE ANY SUCH DIFFICULTIES IN SPIRIT OF AFRICAN UNITY AND OF JUSTICE AND EQUITY.

2. CAMEROON NEWS AGENCY (ACAP) REPORTED THAT NIGERIAN NEWSPAPER "DAILY TIMES" HAD QUOTED NIGERIAN MILITARY AUTHORITY AS MENTIONING "FRONTIER DIFFICULTIES" BETWEEN CAMEROON AND NIGERIA. CAMEROON GOVERNMENT CIRCLES, ACAP ASSERTED, WERE SURPRISED OVER REPORTS ALLEGING THAT "CAMEROONIAN GENDARMES" WERE HARASSING AND ATTACKING NIGERIANS IN THE CONTESTED FRONTIER ZONE. THESE CIRCLES POINTED OUT THAT STRICT INSTRUCTIONS HAD BEEN GIVEN TO CAMEROON POLICEFORCES IN FRONTIER AREA TO AVOID ALL ACTION CONTRARY TO TWO PRINCIPLES OF CAMEROONIAN DIPLOMACY: RESPECT FOR SOVEREIGNTY OF STATES, AND ESTABLISHMENT AND CONSOLIDATION OF FRIENDLY AND NEIGHBORLY RELATIONS. CAMEROON, CONFIDENTIAL

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THEY STATED, IS ALWAYS READY TO MAKE POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION

TO FINDING RAPID AND MUTUALLY SATISFACTORY SOLUTION TO  
PROBLEM OF LAND AND SEA BORDERS WITH NIGERIA.

3. NIGERIAN AMBASSADOR SADA TOLD ME THAT PRESS MUST  
BEAR RESPONSIBILITY FOR CREATING A SITUATION WHICH SHOULD NOT  
HAVE ARISEN. AS HE UNDERSTANDS ORIGIN, THE NEW MILITARY  
COMMANDER AT CALABAR WAS INTERVIEWED BY DAILY TIMES SEVERAL  
WEEKS AGO AND WAS ASKED ABOUT BORDER SITUATION. HE  
APPARENTLY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THERE HAD BEEN PROBLEMS  
IN PAST, BUT SAID THAT NIGERIA WAS NOT GOING TO WAR OVER  
THEM AND THAT THEY COULD BE SOLVED IN GOOD NEIGHBORLY SPIRIT.  
THIS SUBJECT WAS ACTUALLY ONLY A SMALL PART OF INTERVIEW  
BUT WAS GIVEN INFLAMMATORY HEADLINE BY DAILY TIMES.  
LATER IT WAS PICKED UP BY AFP WHICH "HELPFULLY" REPORTED  
IT BACK TO CAMEROON.

4. SADA SAID THAT AS FAR AS HE AWARE SITUATION IN BORDER  
AREA WAS QUIET. HE HAD VISITED AREA, AS WE KNEW, SOME  
MONTHS AGO WHEN FISHING FAMILIES WERE FLEEING TO CALABAR  
BECAUSE OF CONCERN OVER HARASSMENT (REFTELS). MANY HAD  
NOW RETURNED IN RESPONSE TO GURC INVITATION. HE FOUND  
GURC STATEMENT FRIENDLY AND MODERATE BUT QUESTIONED  
WHETHER IT WARRANTED BY ACTUAL SITUATION. HE ADDED THAT FONOFF  
HAD NOT CALLED HIM IN (AS OF APRIL 2) TO DISCUSS MATTER.

5. WHEN I SAW FONOFF SECGEN OWONO APRIL 3 I MENTIONED  
ACAP STATEMENT. HE OBSERVED THAT IT HAD BEEN PREPARED BY  
MININFO IN COLLABORATION WITH PRESIDENCY AND THAT FONOFF  
WAS NOT CONSULTED. DAILY TIMES REPORT, HE ACKNOWLEDGED,  
HAD BEEN BLOWN UP BY PRESS BUT PRESIDENT BELIEVED IT DESIRABLE  
TO HAVE A STATEMENT ISSUED TO KEEP EMOTIONS FROM GETTING OUT  
OF HAND. IT IS IN PRESIDENT'S NATURE TO SEEK BY ALL MEANS  
TO AVOID A CONFRONTATION. LAND AND SEA BORDERS IN SOUTH ARE A  
CONTENTIOUS ISSUE WHICH SHOULD BE RESOLVED. BASIC DIFFICULTY  
IS THAT NIGERIAN CLAIMS ARE INFLUENCED BY PETROLEUM PROSPECTS  
WHEREAS GURC CLAIMS ARE BASED ON SIMPLE ISSUE OF  
SOVEREIGNTY (SIC). PRESIDENT DOES NOT WANT OUTSIDE MEDIATION  
SINCE PROBLEM IS ONE THAT GOOD NEIGHBORS SHOULD BE ABLE TO  
SETTLE BETWEEN THEMSELVES.

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6. I QUERIED OWONO AS TO WHETHER GURC STATEMENT COULD  
BE INTERPRETED AS INVITATION TO NIGERIA TO NEGOTIATE PROBLEM  
NOW. THIS HE DOUBTED, BELIEVING THE MAIN PURPOSE WAS TO  
DAMPEN POTENTIAL REACTIONS IN NIGERIA. WHEN I COMMENTED  
THAT GOOD PERSONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN GENERAL GOWON AND  
AHIDJO SHOULD FACILITATE A SETTLEMENT TO BORDER PROBLEM,  
OWONO EXPRESSED BELIEF THERE WERE HARDLINERS IN FEDERAL  
MILITARY EXECUTIVE COUNCIL, INCLUDING FONMIN, WHOM

GOWON WOULD HAVE TO LISTEN TO. BORDER PROBLEM WAS AN  
IMPORTANT MATTER TO RESOLVE BUT HE SHOWED LITTLE OPTIMISM  
THAT AN EARLY BREAKTHROUGH WAS LIKELY.  
MOORE

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## Message Attributes

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